



Christian Social Services of Illinois

Strengthening Families and Building Community

GOOD NEWS

November 2013

CSS Mission Statement

"As a visible expression of God's loving community and consistent with the example of Jesus Christ, Christian Social Services of Illinois provides direct services to persons of all backgrounds with social and emotional needs across the continuum of life."

CSS Programs

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Counseling
- Day Care / Preschool
- Residential Treatment for Children
- Senior Employment
- Senior Assisted Living

CSS Office Locations

- Belleville
- Carterville
- East Alton
- Mt. Vernon
- Mt. Carmel
- Effingham
- Olney

www.cssil.org

CSS to become Caritas Family Solutions

Christian Social Services of Illinois is in the very early stages of a new journey as an independent non-profit after almost 65 years of operating as an agency of the Catholic Church. To establish a clearer path for this journey, we have chosen a new name that speaks to our virtues, aspirations and the work we do every day: *Caritas Family Solutions*. Caritas (KAR-ee-tahs) is the Latin word for "love" or "charity."

We are very excited about our new name and logo, which will become official on **January 1, 2014**.

We all know very well the growing needs of those we serve in the 42 southernmost counties of Illinois. Child abuse in our communities continues to grow and the fragile state of mind of many of our neighbors is reflected in local headlines daily. Our services are needed more than ever before.

To meet these growing community needs and to identify important new initiatives, our Board of Directors has



CARITAS

FAMILY SOLUTIONS

urged us to consider how we can better reach those we serve, build support among our stakeholders, intensify our relationships with our service partners, tell our story to more people, and make a greater impact in the community.

Caritas Family Solutions will continue to guide families, individuals, parents and caregivers, helping the vulnerable and creating a loving stable environment for thousands in our region. We are helping people live healthy lives, meeting the social and emotional needs of persons of all backgrounds.

We are very grateful for your support. Tell someone about *Caritas Family Solutions*.



Save the Date

For Christian Social Services' Inaugural
2014 Gala
Saturday, February 8, 2014

A black-tie-optional, Mardi Gras-inspired evening, featuring a Cocktail Reception, Silent and Live Auctions, Dinner, Entertainment by *Galaxy* and Dancing!

Contact Sandy Haas, CSS Chief Development Officer, at (618) 688-1168 or sandy.haas@cssil.org

*Jerilee
Hopkins*



*John
Reichert*



*Julie
Reed*

*Sherry
Meadows*



***Make the World
A Better Place –
Make CSS Part of
Your Estate Plan***

Please consider naming Christian Social Services of Illinois in your estate plan. Whether it is a will or living trust, your gift will make a positive difference in the lives of the more than 4,400 people served by CSS annually.

CSS Welcomes Four New Board Members

Christian Social Services recently welcomed four new Board members.

Jerilee Hopkins is the City Clerk for the City of Mt. Vernon. Hopkins has served as a volunteer member of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for CSS's Mt. Vernon Region for more than 5 years and serves as the Co-Chairman of this year's American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Jefferson County.

John Reichert is the owner of In Focus Marketing/Advertising. Reichert serves on the boards of the Greater Belleville Chamber of Commerce and the Lindenwood University, Belleville Advisory Board and is actively involved with Art on the Square and other civic and charitable organizations.

Julie Reed is the Chief Development Officer for Rx Outreach. Reed has been a fundraising professional for more than 10 years. Reed has served on several non-profit boards, including the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois and Kids Place and is on the United Way Women's Leadership cabinet.

Sherry Meadows is the Assessor of Mt. Vernon Township, City of Mt. Vernon. Meadows has been a volunteer for CSS for seven years and Mt. Vernon's RAC Board for four years. She was recently recognized as a Volunteer of the Year for the Alzheimer's Assoc. for the state of Illinois, serves on several nonprofit boards and is a County Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association, St. Louis, MO Chapter.

Successful Adoption Leads to Great Aspirations!

More than 17,000 children in Illinois annually have to be removed from their families through no fault of their own. The unfortunate reality is that many kids live in homes where they are victimized each day of their lives by exposure to drugs, alcohol, physical, emotional, or sexual trauma, or suffer from neglect. Every child deserves to live in a safe, loving, and nurturing home.

Izzy is one of those children. She was placed in foster care when she was only five years old and had a difficult time adjusting to her new life. She also struggled in school and had to have special help so she could reach her educational goals.

Three years ago, Izzy moved in with Sandy and Terry Byers, a couple who was very interested in working with her to calm her behaviors and help her build a

successful future. The foster care team of case workers and counselors decided that it was best for Izzy to be adopted and not return to her biological family. She needed to become part of a caring family.

Though adoption was never the Byers' intent as foster parents, Sandy and Terry loved Izzy and wanted to be able to continue to care for her and provide her with stability. In 2011, Sandy, Terry, and Izzy Byers became a forever family.

Eleven-year-old Izzy has flourished with the Byers, and the couple credits her success to the consistent and visible parameters they've set, which allow her to feel loved and safe. "She feels protected here," says Terry. Izzy has made all A's and B's on her report card this quarter. Terry says his daughter is now a happy, playful, and energetic child who "tries to make other people's days brighter."

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Ava's Adoption Includes An Angel

Ava is a blonde haired, bubbly, two-year-old girl. She is the kind of little girl that lights up a room and can make you smile on a rainy day. Ava is a special child in the fact that she has brought together a very special family. Ava's father Josh said, "People say that you can't choose your family, but in our case, we did."

Karen and Josh struggled with infertility for years. After failed attempts at pregnancy through the use of fertility medication, in vitro fertilization, and embryo adoption, they decided to give up any further attempts and focused on adoption. They researched the various options and decided on adoption through Christian Social Services (CSS). CSS has an office that is close to their house and Karen and Josh found CSS to be one of the most affordable options. They also appreciated that CSS would be able to provide a much more personalized experience than the larger, nationwide agencies.

Going into the adoption process, Karen and Josh were very hesitant about the idea of an open adoption in which the birthmother would have access to her child throughout the child's lifetime. They both were concerned that having a birth mother

involved with their lives would make them feel less like parents and more like babysitters. But, they both realized their fears were unfounded when they met Angel.

Angel found out she was pregnant and knew that she was not prepared for a second child. She was not mentally, emotionally, or financially able to care for the baby while attending college and caring for her older daughter. She went to CSS to choose a family. Angel instantly knew Karen and Josh were the family for Ava -- and for her. They met a week and a half before Angel's scheduled cesarean section delivery.

Then, two days before the scheduled delivery, Angel invited Karen to come along to her last OB/GYN appointment and afterwards had lunch. A strong bond was created between the two. When Ava was born, Karen even stayed the night at the hospital with Angel and the new baby. The next day, December 23rd, Karen and Josh took home their baby girl.

On December 27th, the adoption paperwork was completed and both Ava and Angel became part of the family. Angel, her older daughter, and the rest of Angel's family have been regular fixtures in their lives ever

since. There have been summer barbeques, fall campfires, holiday parties, and lunch dates. For Ava's first birthday party, Karen and Josh invited not only their family and friends, but Ava's birth family as well. As Ava grows up, she will know not only who Angel is, but all of her maternal birth family members.



Angel, baby Ava, and Karen

"Christmas is especially meaningful and a time to celebrate the life milestones of the precious little girl that brought us all together," Karen said. "The next goal for our family is to adopt another baby through CSS. This time, Angel will be right there by our side, helping us find the next member of our family!"



Izzy Byers

Successful Adoption Leads to Great Aspirations! *(continued from page 2)*

Sandy and Terry Byers became foster parents 23 years ago and have worked with Christian Social Services for the past decade. During their time as foster parents, more than 15 children lived in their home. These children, some of whom are now adults, still remain as family in the Byers' hearts. "The kids can stay here as long as they need to stay here so we can help them learn how to behave and deal with their problems," says Terry.

"Kids do better once they get here," says Sandy, a fact she and her husband attribute to their rules and consistency. "Kids need stable boundaries and to know they're safe," she adds.

Happy and trusting, Izzy has come a long way since she was placed with the Byers.

November 2013

CSS Board of Directors

Barbara Calandro, *Chair*
John Hudspeth, *Vice-Chair*
Erin Prest, *Treasurer*
Beverly McCormick, *Sec'y*
Fr. Ray Cook, OMI
Jerilee Hopkins
Robert Lynch
Sherry Meadows
JoAnn Pisel
Matt Rakers
Julie Reed
John Reichert
John Sloser
Ella York

Chief Executive Officer
Gary Huelsmann, MSW

Look for these events in SPRING 2014:

5th Annual
Benefit Breakfast
Metro-East

10th Annual
Charity Breakfast
Carbondale

6th Annual CSS
"Tee Off for Kids' Sake"
Charity Golf Scramble
Mt. Vernon

For more information
visit www.cssil.org



HEADLINE NEWS IN 2013

CSS received the 2012 Business Excellence Award from the Greater Belleville Chamber of Commerce in January. We were also recognized in March as "**Outstanding Agency of the Year**" by the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Department of Social Work.

Also in March, we **purchased the Kil-Mar Building** which houses our Headquarters and Belleville Regional offices. In September we also purchased and moved our **Carbondale offices to a new location in Carterville**. Both purchases have allowed for significant savings over leasing costs while building valuable assets for the agency.

The Carterville office will house a new grant-supported program—Redeploy Illinois—which offers Multi-Systemic Therapy to families of youth at risk in order to keep them out of the juvenile justice system. **CSS was also recently granted a license to become a CILA (Community Integrated Living Arrangements) provider**. This is just the first step towards providing services to the developmentally disabled population. Both of these new programs will begin in 2014.

In 2013, **CSS welcomed Elke Hansen as the new Regional Director for the Belleville Region and Lea Compton as the Regional Director of the East Alton Region**. We also want to recognize our two other regional directors, **Pam Flota of Mt. Vernon and Michelle Bradley of Carterville**, for their excellent work and leadership.

The Mt. Vernon office was awarded a \$10,000 grant from Continental Tire the Americas to create the Continental Little Stars program. Each month, children who are served by the region's foster care and counseling programs can win special gifts that help create a positive environment and increase self-esteem.

CSS was entered into a contest on Facebook by one of our foster parents in October. We won \$1,000 from Scott Credit Union!

If you are on Facebook, please "like" our page and you will see all this good news on a regular basis! And if you'd prefer to receive future newsletters electronically, please send your name, address and **e-mail** address to outreach@cssil.org.

Make A Tax-free Gift From Your IRA

Are you 70½ or older? Your chance to make a tax-free gift from your IRA for 2013 ends December 31. You can transfer up to \$100,000 directly from your IRA to a qualified charity such as CSS. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you don't have to itemize to take advantage of this opportunity. Please consider this tax-free donation to Christian Social Services of Illinois to help our organization provide critical services to more than 4,000 individuals and families annually. For information, please call Sandy Haas, Chief Development Officer, at 618-688-1168.



Christian Social Services of Illinois

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